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BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

The Danish West Indies under Company Rule (1671-1754). With a Supplementary Chapter, 1755-1917, by WALDEMAR WESTERGAARD, PH.D., and an Introduction by H. MORSE STEPHENS. New York: Macmillan, 1917. Pp. xxiv+359. \$2.50.

This volume is a substantial and scholarly contribution to our knowledge of the part played by commercial companies in European expansion as well as to the history of commerce and settlement on the islands of the Caribbean Sea. Lured by the mines, Spaniards neglected their insular possessions, with the result that almost every great European power ultimately gained a foothold on one or more of the West India Islands. Though less favorable for settlement, these tropic isles were long esteemed of far more commercial value than colonies in the temperate zone. Their productions did not compete with but supplemented those of the mother-country, their environment was unfavorable for the rise of rival manufactures, and they tended to drain Europe but slightly of man power. Moreover, their settlement with Africans identified West India colonization with one of the most lucrative commercial activities of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—the slave trade. The European occupation of the West Indies was, in fact, but one phase of a three-cornered commerce involving exports from Europe to the Guinea Coast, cargoes of slaves thence to the West Indies, and shipments of sugar from the latter to Europe—altogether a powerful stimulant to manufacturing, shipbuilding, breeding of seamen, and naval strength. Such was the alluring enterprise the realities of which the colonial powers were seeking to demonstrate through chartered commercial companies.

From the viking age Denmark had a more or less continuous interest in westward exploration and settlement, interrupted by the Black Death, but revitalized in the search for a northwest passage in the early seventeenth century. It was a Dutchman, John de Willom, however, who in 1625 proposed a Danish West India company. But wars delayed matters, and it was not until 1654 that a ship from Elsinore ventured to the West Indies. Others followed. In 1659 a Danish African company with factories on the Guinea Coast began the slave trade with Spanish America. Denmark's international relations, constantly borne in mind by the author, explain many vicissitudes of her colonial commerce.

Thus, in 1670, being an ally of England, she shared the latter's security from attack by Spain in the West Indies. The Danish West India Company, chartered in 1670 and resembling in many respects the British Hudson Bay Company, secured a monopoly of the trade and government of the unoccupied island of St. Thomas, which it settled in 1671 with one hundred and sixteen indentured servants and sixty-one convicts. At first there was great mortality, and convicts made wretched settlers. Sugar canes were obtained from the English at Tortola, many Dutch planters came in, and the Danish African Company was absorbed by the West India Company, thus solving the labor problem with slavery. By 1680 forty-six plantations were settled, the company cultivating two of its own.

In the critical years 1680-90 St. Thomas was frequented by buccaneers whom Danish officials often welcomed; Captain Kidd himself disposed of some of his loot there in 1699. Progress toward sober trade and settlement was slow. In 1685 the Brandenburg Guinea Company and the Danish Company agreed to a joint occupancy of St. Thomas for thirty years. The prime interest of the Brandenburgers, already in possession of an African post, was to secure a West India factory accessible to the colonies of Spain, England, and France. Denmark hoped to obtain German settlers as well as a share in the profits of the slave trade. But friction ensued, the Danes on one occasion breaking into the German warehouses to recover rent, and, in spite of their designs on Crab Island, Tobago, Tortola, and St. Eustatius, few Germans settled in the West Indies. In 1695 the German factory at St. Thomas was looted by the French; in the financial depression that followed, the agreement with the Danes expired and the Germans wound up their business both in Africa and the West Indies at a considerable loss. Frederick William I declared the whole enterprise misdirected energy and capital. Even at that period there is evidence that the Germans had little capacity in dealing with primitive peoples.

It was not until the administration of Governor Lorentz that St. Thomas entered upon a period of economic and social stability. Danish neutrality in the long wars ending in the Peace of Utrecht made that island an active center of trade for the belligerents, England, France, and Spain. Such in fact was the rôle played by the Danes in all colonial wars of the eighteenth century. In time of peace, also, when international trade was prohibited by mercantilist regulations, the Danish West Indies like the Dutch served as a distributing center for an enormous amount of illicit trade. Gradually the company and, after 1754, the royal authority relaxed all restrictions on trade with outsiders until

commerce at St. Thomas and St. John became entirely free in 1815, and that of St. Croix partially in 1823 and entirely in 1833. St. John was first occupied in 1719 and St. Croix was acquired from the French in 1733.

From 1754 to the present, a period which the author plans to cover in two more volumes, a brief but valuable summary is given of such important matters as the prohibition of the slave trade and slavery, the cosmopolitanism of the islands, the liberalization of commercial policy, the rise and decline of St. Thomas as an *entrepôt*, its importance as a coaling and naval station, the decay of sugar and the increase of cotton culture, the general depression of recent years, and the negotiations culminating in annexation to the United States.

The bibliography of twenty pages is admirable. The chief depositories of manuscripts are the Danish state archives, including the entire official records of the West India and Guinea companies, the company records kept at Copenhagen, the Copenhagen municipal archives, the Royal Library at Copenhagen, and the Bancroft collection at Berkeley, California, containing orders by governors of St. Thomas, planters' correspondence, and letter-books of Philip Gardelin, Governor Moth, and Christian Schweder. Particularly useful manuscripts are those by Martfeldt, an economist who visited the islands about 1765-68, and an account of the company by Mariager, who for over thirty years was in its employ and intimately acquainted with its affairs. From printed sources the author has drawn especially from Schück's *Brandenburg-Preussens Kolonial-Politik*. Among secondary writers Höst (1791) attempted the first chronological history of the Danish West Indies, Isert's travels to Guinea and the Caribbean (1788) are valuable for the slave trade, Knox's *Historical Account of St. Thomas* (New York, 1852) has been practically the only available book in English, Krarup's *Iversen* (1891) and *Milan* (1894) are accurate and exhaustive studies of the first and fourth governors, and Oldendorp's history of the Moravian mission in the Danish West Indies (1777) is still the best account of that subject. J. A. Friderica and Edvard Holm among modern scholars have written with care on the East and West India companies.

Appendixes of sixty-four pages contain manuscript data of considerable importance to the antiquarian and economic historian, including lists of governors, directors, and shareholders of the company, the company's charters of 1671 and 1697, correspondence, and statistical tables on population, plantations, slave cargoes, prices of sugar and cotton, exports of sugar from Copenhagen, receipts and debts of the company, its invested capital and returns, and various phases of its business in sugar and cotton.

Altogether the work has been done with accuracy, extensive acquaintance with the sources to 1754, adequate knowledge of the European background, and a sensible appreciation of the significant rôle these tiny but strategically situated islands have played in the commerce and, as neutrals, in the wars of Colonial America, and of the naval worth, as Admiral Mahan predicted, they are likely to possess in the future.

In places perhaps the book would have gained in clearness and value had the author pursued less the method of general chronological narrative and had organized his data more completely according to well-defined subjects. An economic and social analysis of West India society can be accomplished, however, only after more studies of the type of Dr. Westergaard's enable us to make comparisons of the various national groups in the West Indies. When the facts of West India development are fully revealed and understood we shall be in a far better position to appreciate the economic as well as the political and diplomatic history of America.

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The Fetishism of Liberty. By HARRY WATON. New York: Marxian Philosophical Society, 1917. Pp. vii+101.

Is not your iconoclast at bottom a devout worshiper? A Marxian socialist declares liberty to be "one of the most dangerous idols worshiped by the people of this century," and thereupon justifies his faith in socialism because it is in harmony with that tendency of the cosmic process of evolution—universal freedom. As the patron saint sought to destroy the fetishism of commodities and humanize them, the humble follower attacks the fetishism of liberty and seeks to socialize it. Both are worshipers of capitalism and liberty still.

We start with the familiar conflict between the individual or group with inherited anti-social impulses and society with its legal and customary restraints. The socialist outdoes Spencer here. Then comes the happy ending, where the individual is completely socialized and conflict is no more. This is true to Marxian prophecy, "We feel in a state of liberty when we can gratify our needs and desires." The individual is not and cannot be free until he seeks the social good. The tendency of social evolution is toward a state of ever-increasing constraint of the anti-social impulses of the individual. Hence, only as we seek the satisfaction of our social nature do we find freedom and happiness. Fortunately the conditions of life make for pro-sociality and individual well-being at the same time.

The essay has certain faults. It abounds in contradictions, perhaps because terms are loosely used; the thread of the argument does not unroll singly and continuously; and generalizations are not always supported by data. And yet there is such sound truth in its emphasis upon the true uses of liberty and the opportunity to satisfy one's social needs and desires that all else may be forgotten.